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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2658
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY 1785

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 007101

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FOR S/CRS OSCAR DE SOTO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/30/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [FR](#)
SUBJECT: FRANCE CONFIRMS TO S/CRS HERBST THAT IT HAS NO
EQUIVALENT ORGANIZATION

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, Reason 1
.4 B/D

¶1. (C) Summary: October 19, visiting S/CRS Ambassador John Herbst met with both working and senior-level French counterparts to share the USG experience in establishing a central coordinating office for reconstruction and stabilization activities and to encourage creation of a similar structure within the French bureaucracy. While the French appreciated a frank discussion of the process of establishing such an office and defining its role, most noted that their own internal discussions on military-civilian

cooperation were still far from achieving consensus. Ambassador Herbst was accompanied by OSD DAS for Stability Operations Jeffrey Nadaner for the first meeting with MFA IO Director Sylvia Bermann, during which Bermann asserted that France did not need such coordination capability, adding that France relies primarily on EU capabilities for dealing with countries in post-conflict situations, although France has created bilateral stabilization and reconstruction projects in Africa (DRC and elsewhere) via the French RECAMP program and more recently in Lebanon (police training.) Other areas of concern for France include how best to handle Darfur, possibly with AU and Arab countries' intervention with Sudanese President Bashir, the DRC (the EU's ESDP mission in support of elections) and Haiti. End summary.

¶2. (C) On October 19, S/CRS Ambassador John Herbst, accompanied by S/CRS Office Director Oscar de Soto, S/CRS Diplomatic Strategy Advisor Martha Patterson, and DAS Nadaner met with MFA IO Director Sylvie Bermann and representatives from other MFA offices (see para 7). Ambassador Herbst began with an informal overview of the USG's experience in establishing the State Department Office of Stabilization and Reconstruction. He noted that initial interagency disagreements had slowed the start-up of the office, but that he now had a staff of 68 people, soon to grow to 80 and representing a variety of government agencies, which is working on training, crisis management planning and implementing projects in the field. Ambassador Herbst noted that S/CRS does not have its own budget from Congress, but that the Department of Defense had received Congressional authority in both FY 2006 and 2007 to transfer to S/CRS up to 100 million USD per year in funds to them for special projects.

France Favors the EU Approach

¶3. (C/NF) Bermann observed that France does not have a

separate organization akin to S/CRS, but relied on coordination among the French military, the MFA Office of Cooperation and Development (AID-equivalent), the MFA EU Directorate, her own International Organizations bureau and the office of Ambassador Wiltzer, High Representative for Security and the Prevention of Conflicts. (Note: C/NF: an MFA contact in the Political Director's office described Wiltzer's position as a sinecure, with sufficient perquisites to ease him out of his previous post as Minister-Delegate for Cooperation, Development and Francophonie, and to dissuade him from seeking a Senate seat in his home district of L'Essonne that the UMP party had reserved for Serge Dassault. End Note) Bermann stated that France often prefers that the EU assist countries in a post-conflict situation, although there are occasional differences in priorities between the Commission and European Security and Defense Policy organs. At the national level, French stabilization efforts are handled ad-hoc by various ministries, depending on response needs and competencies, with the military normally taking the initial lead.

14. (C) Bermann related that the GOF maintained a data base of retired military and other specialists working in the private sector, who can be mobilized to handle emergencies, such as disaster relief. Their employers, often in public sector industries, have no problem letting these individuals go for the duration of a crisis. She also commented that her IO office often has the lead on crisis management and stabilization, given that many relief and assistance efforts fall under a UN mandate. The MFA is keen on improving the current response system, and has looked into the idea of forming a situation center, but wishes to avoid the creation of a new bureaucracy. (Comment: the MFA had previously flagged to us that an inability to fund new positions was a key reason for MFA wariness of USG calls to establish an S/CRS counterpart. End Comment)

French interest in Africa: DRC, Darfur

15. (C) Bermann briefly described the work of France's RECAMP program (Reinforcement of African Peace-keeping Capacities), a joint MFA and MOD program originally designed to develop the military capacity of African armed forces, but which now includes a stabilization component, as well as exercises. She explained that in addition to focusing many of its bilateral training efforts for African nations through RECAMP, France seeks to convince its EU partners to channel EU training assistance through the RECAMP program. With regard to other efforts in the region, Bermann and Ambassador Herbst agreed that the UN Peacebuilding Commission would face problems similar to those encountered by France and the U.S. Bermann suggested that the Peacebuilding Commission would have a difficult time based on the small budget allocated to deal with problems in Burundi and Sierra Leone, two countries also chosen as recipients for EU aid. Looking ahead, she told Ambassador Herbst that the DRC and Haiti are two fragile states that are in need of reconstruction assistance. She added that, more recently, France had undertaken to provide police training assistance in Lebanon.

16. (C) In response to Ambassador Herbst's query, Bermann explained that the EU military mission in support of MONUC in DRC had been envisioned as a security operation only for the duration of the election process. Unfortunately, security problems are ongoing and the possibility exists that the EU's ESDP mission, in consultation with the UN's DPKO, will need to be extended. Germany may pose a problem, Bermann confided, given that the German parliament would need to bless any decision to extend the German component, who are scheduled to de-mobilize in November.

17. (C) Turning to the UN mission in Darfur, Bermann stated the international community would need to obtain Sudanese President Bashir's support. We will need to reassure him that we are not promoting regime change, but are looking to support AMIS Plus, she added. To make progress with Bashir, we also will need the help of Egypt and other Arab countries.

Bermann explained that the AU and some Arab countries believe it is still possible to obtain Bashir's concurrence. In response to Ambassador Herbst's question on whether France would intervene should the killing intensify, Bermann would only note that this would depend on the situation and whether it could be termed "genocide," which implied an obligation to intervene.

18. (U) French Participants in Ambassador Herbst meeting with Sylvie Bermann:

-- General Jacques Bonningues, MFA representative from the Office of the High Representative for Security and the Prevention of Conflicts.

-- Michel Gardas, representative from the same office.

-- Paul Dahan, PDAS-equivalent for the MFA's Strategic Affairs, Security, and Disarmament Directorate.

-- Florian Escudie, Desk officer in the same Directorate.

-- Benoit Guidee, Desk officer in the MFA's IO Directorate.

-- Lt.Col. Benoit Semur, representative from the MFA's Directorate for Military and Defense Cooperation.

Actual Projects in the Field

19. (C) At a separate meeting hosted by the MFA's Policy Planning office with representatives from the MFA, MOD, and the Secretariat General for National Defense (SGDN) from the PM's office, Ambassador Herbst briefed attendees on S/CRS, noting the office writes exercises and country plans and conducts joint exercises with DOD. With the use of the 10 million USD from DOD in FY06, S/CRS had created projects for de-mining and for building up police capabilities in Lebanon.

Other projects under consideration in FY07 include enhancing police capabilities in Haiti. The S/CRS office had already deployed people "on the ground" in places as varied as Nepal, Beirut, Sudan and Chad and in Haiti. Once people see the value they can add, S/CS is often requested to extend their deployments. He also described the S/CRS office "Active Response Corps," a group of 12 experts currently available to deploy abroad within one or two days; four of whom have

already been sent to Darfur to assist. The Office also has developed a "Standby Response Corps" of 300 Foreign Service officers and recent retirees who have agreed to be deployed to a trouble spot when needed. Together they form the pre-cursor to a larger civilian reserve corps, assuming that Congress agrees to provide the necessary funding.

Goals for the Future

110. (C) To a very receptive audience at the Policy Planning office, eager to learn from S/CRS's experiences, Ambassador Herbst laid out the progress made to date and described several goals that he would like to see S/CRS achieve during the next 18 months. These include S/CRS obtaining its own budget and further establishing its role as an interagency coordinator with the capability to frame issues for decision at a PCC-level. S/CRS would like to build up a civilian reserve corps to provide a ready supply of civilian experts (such as economists, judges, police, water experts and others) who are prepared to deploy for short-term assignments in post-crisis areas. More long-term, he noted completion of a study on how to structure and manage a grander program which could be modeled on that of the U.S. Army Reserves. He offered to share the study with the French if they were interested in seeing how such a concept could be developed and implemented.

Establishing an International Network

¶11. (C) Ambassador Herbst said that he had traveled to, or met with, interested counterparts in London, Brussels (EU and NATO) and Berlin, and that he believed that an international understanding was developing that could support similar coordination efforts in other countries. There is as yet no international consensus on what form stabilization and reconstruction efforts could take, but there is large agreement within the foreign policy community that civilian efforts are as important as military ones. He noted that all the countries in Europe have the ability to develop further their stabilization and reconstruction capabilities, and that it is within our common interest to share our experiences and develop contacts with each other.

Comment

¶12. (C) France clearly has not made and is not seeking to make much progress in developing an independent RS capacity. Sylvie Bermann's policy-level meeting highlighted the different approaches French agencies have taken to date, implying a reluctance by these agencies to cede responsibility to a new organization. By contrast, the working level group assembled at the French MFA's policy planning center (CAP) appeared more engaged on setting up a focused reconstruction and stabilization program. They agreed that threats today could only be partially defended against through traditional military action and that failed states, extremist ideologies and loose control of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) also needed to be addressed in new ways. They were pleased that the USG model supported close cooperation with the UN and other international bodies (including NGOs). End comment.

¶13. (U) This message was reviewed and cleared by S/CRS Ambassador Herbst.
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